Amendments to the Claims

1   Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of enhancing a voice mail ~~messages~~ <u>message</u> for

2   playback to a listener, further comprising steps of:

3   <u>creating a voice mail message for a listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the voice</u>

4   <u>mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;</u>

5   <u>identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message segments</u>

6   <u>which are to have background sound associated therewith;</u>

7   <u>selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the telephone</u>

8   <u>device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the sounds selected</u>

9   <u>as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different sounds; and</u>

10   ~~storing a voice mail message;~~

11   ~~separately storing a background sound that has been selected for incorporating with the~~

12   ~~voice mail message;~~

13   <u>responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the ~~stored~~ voice mail message,</u>

14   <u>playing back at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to be</u>

15   <u>associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound selected</u>

16   <u>as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified message segments, and wherein</u>

17   <u>the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back identified</u>

18   <u>message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for the voice</u>

19   <u>mail message changes at least once during the playback.</u> ~~incorporating the separately-stored~~

20   ~~background sound with the stored voice mail message; and~~

21   ~~playing back a result of the incorporating step.~~

Claims 2 - 8 (canceled)

1   Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the <u>selecting step</u>

2   <u>further comprises entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-specific personal</u>

3   <u>identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal identification value</u>

4   <u>causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically</u>

5   <u>selected, without intervention by the caller.</u> ~~background sound is selected programmatically,~~

6   ~~based on a speaker-specific, device-independent identifier provided by a speaker of the voice mail~~

7   ~~message.~~

Claim 10 (canceled)

1   Claim 11 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, <u>further comprising the step of</u>

2   <u>creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message, wherein</u>

3   <u>the caller-specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds on</u>

4   <u>which days; and</u> wherein the <u>selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-</u>

5   <u>specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the</u>

6   <u>sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically</u> selected, <u>based</u>

7   <u>on the day on which the voice mail message is created.</u> ~~selected background sound is~~

8   ~~programmatically selected from among a plurality of background sounds, based on a date on~~

9   ~~which a speaker leaves the voice mail message for storing.~~

Claims 12 - 13 (canceled)

1   Claim 14 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected

2   background ~~sound is~~ sounds are selected randomly from a plurality of available background

3   sounds.

1   Claim 15 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of

2   creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and

3   wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-specific profile,

4   responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the sounds to be

5   associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected according to the

6   profile, without intervention by the caller. ~~background sound is selected using a profile associated~~

7   ~~with a speaker of the voice mail message, without intervention of the speaker.~~

Claim 16 (canceled)

1   Claim 17 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step

2   further comprises selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a plurality of sounds

3   which are statically configured as sounds selectable ~~selected background sound is selected based~~

4   ~~on its having been configured as a device-specific selection to be used with voice mail messages~~

5   from [[a]] the telephone device ~~from which the stored voice mail message originates~~.

1 Claim 18 (currently amended): The method according to Claim [[2]] 1, wherein the ~~one or more~~

2 selected ~~background~~ sounds are ~~dynamically~~ selected~~, by a speaker of the voice mail message,~~

3 from among a plurality of ~~background~~ sounds that are available to, and offered to the caller by, an

4 apparatus on which the voice mail message is ~~stored~~ being recorded.

Claim 19 (canceled)

1 Claim 20 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of

2 transmitting the selected background [[sound]] sounds from [[a]] the telephone device ~~used by a~~

3 ~~speaker of~~ to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

1 Claim 21 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 20, wherein the selected

2 background ~~sound has been~~ sounds are compressed prior to the transmitting.

1 Claim 22 (currently amended): The method according to Claim [[2]] 1, further comprising the

2 step of ~~wherein the plurality of selected background sounds are selected by~~ transmitting, for each

3 of the selected sounds, an identifier ~~identifiers~~ thereof from [[a]] the telephone device ~~used by a~~

4 ~~speaker of~~ to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the

5 apparatus to obtain the played-back sounds.

1 Claim 23 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of

2   ~~wherein the selected background sound is selected by~~ transmitting, for each of the selected

3   sounds, an address thereof from [[a]] the telephone device ~~used by a speaker of~~ to an apparatus

4   on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address for each of

5   the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back ~~containing the selected~~

6   ~~background~~ sound.

1   Claims 24 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 23, wherein at least one of the

2   transmitted ~~address~~ addresses is a Uniform Resource Locator.

Claims 25 - 27 (canceled)

1   Claim 28 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step

2   further comprises the step of selecting at least one of the sounds ~~the selected background sound~~

3   ~~has been selected~~ using one of: a dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) capability of [[a]] the

4   telephone device; ~~used by a speaker of the voice mail message;~~ a touch-sensitive display screen of

5   the telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone device; or a voice

6   recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the voice mail

7   message ~~for storing~~.

Claims 29 - 33 (canceled)

1   Claim 34 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a

2   listener, further comprising steps of:

3   <u>creating a voice mail message for a listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the voice</u>

4   <u>mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;</u>

5   ~~storing a voice mail message as a plurality of message segments;~~

6   <u>selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file to insert</u> ~~separately storing~~

7   ~~one or more audio files, each of which has been selected for inserting~~ into the voice mail message

8   (1) between one or more selected pairs of successive ones of the message segments, (2) prior to a

9   first one of the message segments, and/or (3) following a last one of the message segments, such

10   that ~~each of~~ the selected audio [[files]] <u>file</u> is associated with <u>the selected pair(s) of message</u>

11   <u>segments,</u> the first one of the message segments, <u>and/or</u> the last one of the message segments,

12   ~~and/or the selected pair(s) of message segments,~~ respectively; and

13   inserting ~~each of~~ the <u>selected</u> audio [[files]] <u>file</u> between the successive ones of the

14   message segments in its associated pair(s), prior to the associated first one of the message

15   segments, and/or following the associated last one of the message segments, as appropriate, as the

16   voice mail message is played back to the listener.

Claims 35 - 36 (canceled)

1   Claim 37 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 34, wherein ~~at least one of~~ the

2   audio [[files]] <u>file</u> is an audio signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.

Claims 38 - 42 (canceled)

1 Claim 43 (withdrawn): A method of merchandising pre-recorded sound files, further comprising

2 steps of:

3   marketing a telephone device that has one or more pre-recorded sound files locally

4 accessible, such that telephone calls initiated from the telephone device can be delivered to

5 recipients with one or more of the pre-recorded sound files blended with a voice message of the

6 initiated telephone call.

Claims 44 - 89 (canceled)

1 Claim 90 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein a telephone call

2 placed by the ~~speaker~~ caller for creating the voice mail message is transparently extended, without

3 intervention of the ~~speaker~~ caller, following the ~~speaker's~~ caller's completion of the voice mail

4 message, and wherein the ~~transmission~~ transmitting occurs during the transparent extension, after

5 which the transparently-extended telephone call is automatically ended.

1 Claim 91 (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 43, wherein different telephone devices

2 are marketed that have different collections of pre-recorded sound files.

Claims 92 - 95 (canceled)

1 Claim 96 (new): A method of enabling sound files to be blended with a voice message,

2 comprising steps of:

3   statically configuring a telephone device with a plurality of pre-recorded sound files; and

4   upon initiating a telephone call from the telephone device, blending at least one of the pre-

5 recorded sound files with a voice message of the initiated telephone call.

1 Claim 97 (new): The method according to Claim 96, wherein the at least one pre-recorded sound

2 files blended with the voice message are selected by a caller who initiates the telephone call.

1 Claim 98 (new): The method according to Claim 96, wherein the at least one pre-recorded sound

2 files are blended as background for the voice message.